

Role of Communications Satellites in the National and Global Information Infrastructure



Geostationary, Earth-orbiting satellites (multicast, interactive, delay tolerant, and high rate).

Early in 1995, the Satellite Industry Task Force (SITF) was initiated by executives of the satellite industry to define the role for communication satellites in the National and Global Information Infrastructure (NII/GII). Satellites are essential to this information network because they offer ubiquitous coverage and less time to market. SITF, which was chaired by Dr. Thomas Brackey of the Hughes Space and Communication Division, grew out of a series of workshops held during the summer of 1994 by the communication industry, NASA, and the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA). Experts were convened from 20 companies representing satellite and terrestrial network builders, operators, and users. For 8 months they worked to identify challenges for the satellite industry to play a pivotal role in the National and Global Information Infrastructure. NASA Lewis Research Center personnel helped out with technical and policy matters.

After collecting significant amounts of data and analysis on various issues, SITF participants reached a consensus on five key challenges. Three of the challenges are policy related: access to the communications sector of the electromagnetic spectrum, trade and security, and access to markets. The remaining two are technical: seamless interoperability and technology advancement. SITF also recommended various actions to be taken by the U.S. Government and industry to meet these challenges.

SITF findings were presented to U.S. Vice President Al Gore during the Office of Science and Technology Policy's White House Forum on September 12, 1995, as part of the U.S. Government's efforts to promote the National and Global Information Infrastructure. This meeting was attended by NASA Administrator Daniel Goldin and by senior representatives from the Federal Communication Commission, the Department of Defense, the Justice Department, and other U.S. agencies, as well as by high-level executives representing the 20 member companies of SITF.